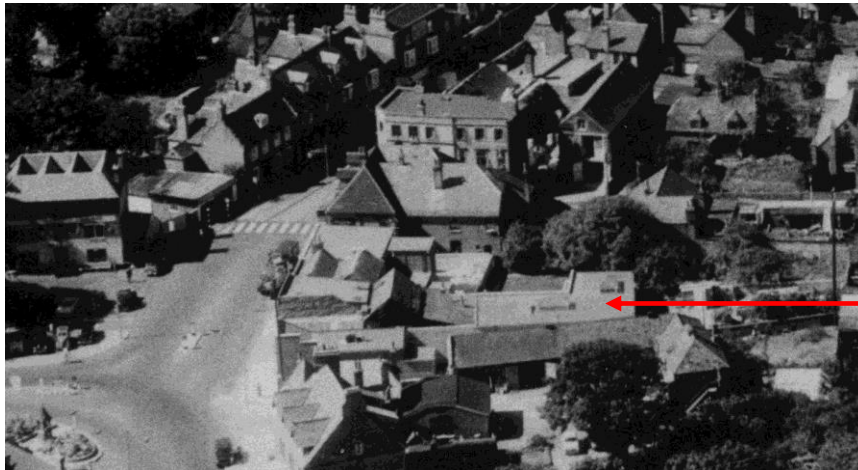


The Birchington Institute – & Charity

The Institute was begun in c. 1878, using an existing building behind the shops on the north side of the Square. It stood in the area behind Brill's Hardware Shop in what is now the Albion Road car park and stretched a short way towards the car park entrance. The idea for it came from the first vicar, the Rev. John Price Alcock, soon after he arrived here in 1871. All the other notable members of the community backed the concept, as there was no other meeting place in Birchington, and so the first "Village Centre" was born.



**INSTITUTE
Building
site
1959**

It continued to thrive and was very well used for a number of years, but as the community grew, it became obvious that a larger venue was needed. From this came the idea of a new Public Hall, to be built on the north side of Station Road. We now know it as "The Cornerstone Church", although it has recently been handed over to the Baptist community. When it was first opened in 1902 it became out second "Village Centre" and for a time ran alongside the Institute. When the Institute was finally sold, the money was invested because so much of the money raised had come from the public and the Institute Charity was created.

The building was used for storage and for part of a builder's workshop for a number of years, but it eventually became very badly in need of major repairs. The area was later cleared and became part of the car-park and part of the shop premises in the Square.

By 1965 the committee who ran this consisted of Mr Frederick William Mellanby JP (Chairman), Miss Kathleen Phillips JP, Mr H.E. Jeston (headmaster of Grenham House School), Mr Harry Snell of Westgate, Mr Ron Thurgood (owner Thurgood's Haberdashers and dress shop), Mr Claude Barrows, (owner of Barrows' Shoe Shop), Mr Frank Maxted, (Butcher in Station Road), Mr Norman Bedingfield (owner of Bedingfield's Stores and Post Office in Canterbury Road) and Miss R.I. Dartnell of Gallwey Avenue. Unfortunately, during 1966-7 Mr Mellanby had died and when his relatives were sorting out his home in Alpha Road, for some strange reason they destroyed all the records relating to the Institute and its history. At a meeting in Miss Phillips' home on the 8th November 1968 this fact was recorded in the minutes of the charity's annual meeting, for which a new book had had to be purchased.

Mr Snell wrote to the Charity Commissioners to tell them of this and asked for a copy of the articles of the scheme formed to run the charity, which were duly sent. Miss Phillips was voted as the new Chairman of the charity and under her guidance the committee planned to give out the parcels to those in need. They decided that year that the parcels would be delivered after Christmas, to avoid the glut which some people were experiencing. The recipients (some of whom received something from other charities in the village) were very glad of the gifts, but did not want them all in the same week.

There is a list of the beneficiaries included from 1969 onwards and there were between about 5 and 20. The names and addresses are included, which makes a wonderful record of local people from 1969 to 2001. The charity was wound up in 2002 and the remaining money was handed over to the Crispe Charity, because the two had some very similar aims for the people of Birchington.

Jennie Burgess June 2010